BIOGRAPHY

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WILLIAM OWEN BALDWIN

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UNIVERSITY ALABAMA

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WILLIAM OWEN BALDWIN was born of pioneer southern stock on August 9, 1818, about four miles north of the site where the city of Montgomery, Alabama, was later incorporated.

Two Alibamu Indian towns had been established in this area which the Indians called the Chunnanugga Chatty (high red bluff). The Indians had flourished in this district until their defeat by General Andrew Jackson in 1814. The next year, white settlers moved into the surrounding country, which was part of the Mississippi Territory. Baldwin's parents, along with the Fitzpatricks and others, settled there in 1816. In August, 1817, the United States Government began the sale of land in this section of the country. Congress in the meantime had divided the Mississippi Territory on March 1, 1817, and two days later organized the Alabama Territory, the name being taken from the above-mentioned Indians.

Three villages of white settlers replaced the Indian towns: Town of Alabama, Philadelphia, and East Alabama, and the Baldwins lived near the first of these. The latter two of these towns were incorporated as the City of Montgomery on December 3, 1819, eleven days before Alabama was admitted to the Union.

Dr. Baldwin's great-grandfather, David Baldwin, who was a native of Virginia, moved to North Carolina in early life. It was there that he met and married Miss Sarah Owen, after whom numerous members of the Baldwin family have been named. Some years later, David Baldwin and his family settled in Columbia County, Georgia. Four children were born to this union, a daughter and three sons, and two of the sons joined the Revolutionary Army, as did their father. One of these two sons, William, who was born in North Carolina, married a Miss Elizabeth Kimbro and then became a planter in Georgia. His son, William Baldwin, who was the father of Dr. William Owen Baldwin, was born in Georgia and married a Miss Cecelia Fitzpatrick of his native state. Miss Fitzpatrick's father was a member of the Georgia Legislature for nineteen years and her youngest brother, Benjamin, later became governor of Alabama, 1841-1845. He subsequently filled out two unexpired terms of United States senators and was selected by the Alabama Legislature for the United States Senate in 1855, which office he resigned when Alabama seceded from the Union in the early part of 1861. Dr. Baldwin's eldest brother, Marion Augustus, was attorney-general of Alabama from 1847 to 1865, and one of the able lawyers in the State.

When William Owen Baldwin was nine years old, his father died, leaving a widow with seven children, of whom he was the second son and the fourth child. Of Dr. Baldwin's childhood, we have very little information except that he lived on a plantation near the Indian reservation which was located between Montgomery and Columbus,

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Georgia. He often remarked about the war-whoop of the savage which frequently broke the peaceful stillness of a moonless night. He received his education at an academy near his home, which was conducted by Mr. Addison H. Sample, a man of great reputation in his day as a linguist and finished scholar.

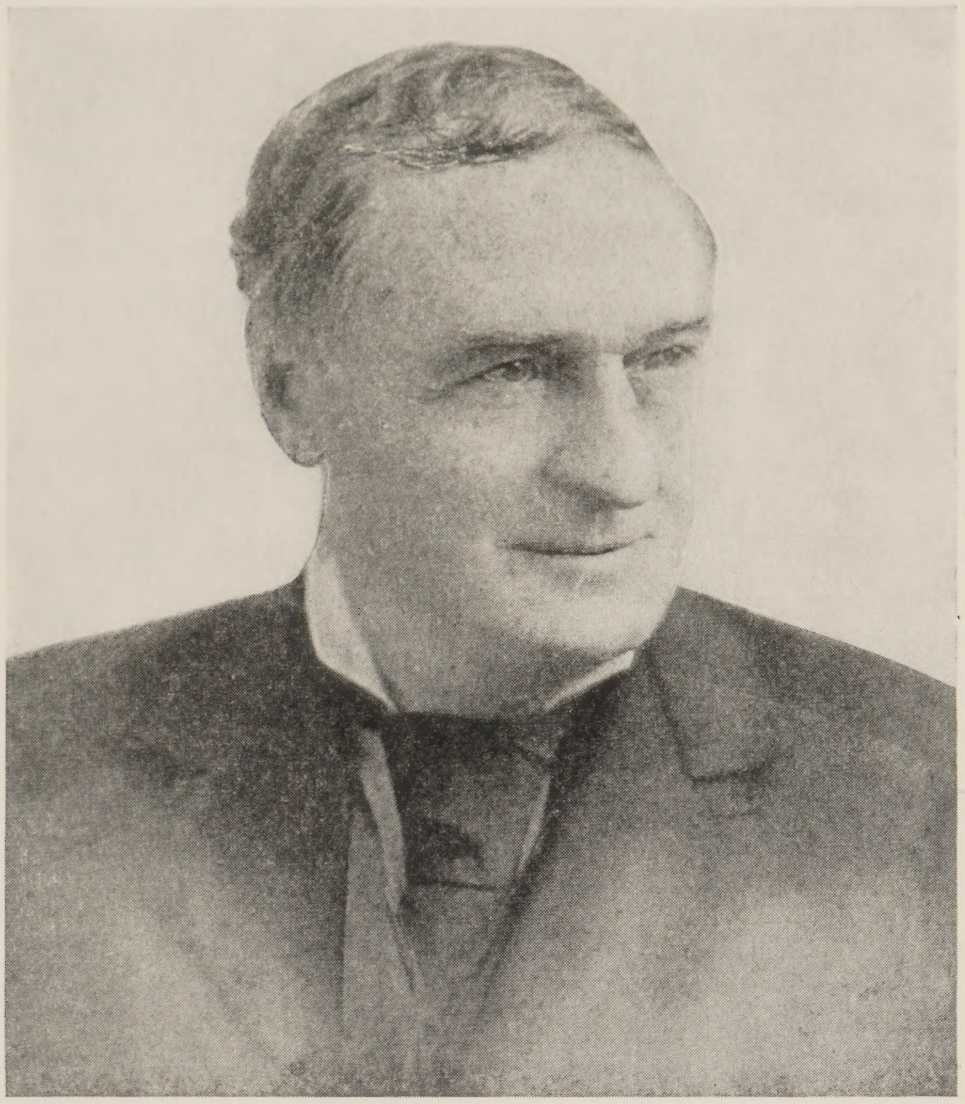

Fig. 1. William Owen Baldwin (1818-1886).

Dr. Baldwin did not go to college, but at sixteen years of age began to read medicine with Dr. McLeod, the leading physician in Montgomery, before matriculating in the medical college of Transylvania University in the fall of 1835. His selection of a medical school was no doubt influenced somewhat by Dr. McLeod who had graduated from that institution in 1831, and also by the renown of the faculty of medicine of that University. The professor of anatomy and surgery, Dr. Benjamin Winslow Dudley, had attained world wide reputation as a lithotomist; having performed the operation 225 times. As early as 1827, the *Kentucky Gazette* records that Dr. Dudley operated three times for stone in one day. He was declared in England to be the foremost lithotomist of the nineteenth century. As further evidence that the medical college of Transylvania University had a good reputation in this section of the country, twenty-seven other Alabamians were students at the medical college during 1836-37; twenty were taking the first year of medicine and seven were graduated with Dr. Baldwin on February 20, 1837, after finishing the regular two-year medical course. Dr. Baldwin's dissertation, "Puerperal Fever," is on file at Tran-

sylvania. The paper covers forty-one pages, eight inches by ten inches, and the writing is clear and pleasing.

Though a graduate of medicine, Dr. Baldwin determined to continue his classical studies and made immediate arrangements to attend the University of Virginia. An accident prevented his carrying out this laudable determination; but, for many of the first years of his professional life, he gave to the classics his special attention.

On the first day of May, 1837, Dr. William Owen Baldwin began the practice of medicine in Montgomery, and three years later entered into partnership with his former preceptor, Dr. McLeod, who died a year later. Dr. Baldwin continued the practice of medicine by himself until 1848 when he and Dr. William Bolling formed a professional partnership which continued in force for four years. The year after the partnership was formed, Dr. Bolling served as professor of obstetrics at the medical college of Transylvania University and subsequently was a professor at Memphis. At Dr. Bolling's death, in 1859, Dr. Baldwin delivered a touching eulogy over the grave of this learned physician. Later on he wrote a tribute to Dr. Bolling, and one of his friends and associates, Dr. R. F. Michel, made the following comment concerning the paper: "It gave us a just idea of the style of the Doctor's composition; it was terse, forcible and pathetic."

Mary Jane Martin, daughter of Colonel Abram and Jane (Patton) Martin, of Montgomery County, became the wife of Dr. Baldwin on December 7, 1843. Seven children were born to this union, and the first of these, William Owen, left the State University at Tuscaloosa to enlist as a private in the Twenty-second Alabama Regiment of the Confederate States Army, and rose to the rank of Captain before he was eighteen. He was killed at the battle of Franklin, Tennessee, November 30, 1864, when he was nineteen.

Dr. Baldwin gave freely of his time and services to the Confederate cause by attending wounded and sick soldiers, but declined a commission in the army. He was frequently on the battlefield giving aid to the wounded in the thick of cannon fire, but escaped without serious injury.

He took an active part in the Alabama State Medical Association and on December 10, 1849, he delivered the annual address on, "Physic and Physicians," before the members of the Association and the members of the State Legislature at the Capitol. The range of discussion covered a wide field which embraced the intellectual, moral, social, and professional positions of physicians. He defended the science of medicine from quacks and empirics of every description and devoted considerable space to the heresies and humbugs of homeopathy, but withal in a dignified and manly tone. The paper met with such general favor that seventy dollars were allocated at the next annual meeting of the Association for printing and distributing it to the public. It was at this meeting that he was elected the first vice-president of the Alabama State Medical Association on December 12, 1850, and due to the death of the president, Dr. C. E. Lavender, presided at the next annual meeting of the Association, December 8-11, 1851.

There are numerous entries in the Annual Proceedings of the Alabama State Medical Association concerning Dr. Baldwin. He made many reports at the annual meetings, at which he frequently served as a delegate from one or another of his local medical socie ties. He also served as a delegate from

the Alabama State Medical Association at several of the annual meetings of the American Medical Association. He served on many committees of the State Association and because of their importance to the health of this section, two of them are given: (1) committee to prepare a memorial to the State Legislature urging the construction of a hospital for the insane in Alabama and, as was specified in the resolution, to aid Miss Dorothea Lynde Dix in her efforts in the same direction, December 14, 1850, and (2) committee to memorialize the State Legislature on purchase of the United States Marine Hospital at Mobile in 1872.

Dr. Baldwin was interested in the work of the American Medical Association and took an active part in its annual meetings. At the close of the Civil War, there was a general feeling that the southern physicians and surgeons should identify themselves again with the American Medical Association. And in 1868, a group of southern doctors did attend the annual meeting of that organization at Washington City. It was on May 7, at this meeting that Dr. Baldwin was elected president of the National Association. Because of the import of the reunion of these two groups of practitioners, he chose to present an acceptance speech; which custom apparently had not been established by others who had been so honored by the Association. His acceptance speech was a masterpiece in its content as it concerned the unification of spirit of the northern and southern practitioners of medicine.

At the next annual meeting of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, Dr. Weatherly engaged the attention of the Association with a few remarks concerning the cordial spirit that was manifested at the last meeting of the American Medical Association, after which the following resolution was offered and adopted:

> *Resolved,* That the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, now in session in Mobile, highly appreciate the honor conferred upon the South, and particularly the State of Alabama, by the American Medical Association, at its late session in Washington city, in the selection as its presiding officer, of Dr. William O. Baldwin, of Montgomery, Alabama, and that this Association pledge a full attendance of delegates at the next session of the American Medical Association, to be held in the city of New Orleans in May next.

The next annual meeting of the American Medical Association was held in New Orleans, May 4-7, 1869. Dr. Baldwin presided and his presidential address was received with the highest praise by the medical writers, as well as by the press. One writer had this to say concerning the address: "His address as President on that occasion is replete with Christian and patriotic sentiments, so beautifully expressed and well-timed as to remain shining landmarks in the history of the Association." The *New Orleans Republican* emphasized its extensive medical research and practical advice, as well as its conservative and national tone. After dwelling on the moral spirit of the Association, Dr. Baldwin proceeded to discuss the subject of medical education, the elevation of which was the chief object for which the American Medical Association was organized. He contrasted the lax system of medical education tolerated in this country with the thorough course required of the student by the European system and urged a reform in medical colleges, which should establish "a uniform and elevated standard of requirements for the degree of M.D." He ad-

vocated the establishment of one or more national medical schools or universities which should confer such distinctions and privileges as would be proportionate to the superiority they demand, and such as would make the attainment of a diploma an object of the ambition of those engaged in the study of medicine. He suggested that the chairs be open to all aspirants, but that the appointment or election of professors be so guarded as to secure the very highest talents, the most profound learning, with the most fully demonstrated capacity for teaching. He also suggested that the salaries of the professors be large and not dependent upon the number of students and that the Federal Government should assume a proper share of the expense.

On the motion for adjournment of the 1869 session of the Association, Dr. Baldwin delivered a short address, which was unanimously ordered to be published in the minutes of the Association. One paragraph of that address is given since it seems to express his feelings concerning the proper relations of the members of the Association.

Gentlemen:

To win your judgement and approval, to hold up the dignity of fellowship, the usefulness of association, and the interest and prosperity of the profession at large, have certainly occupied my anxious thoughts since my elevation to this position; yet to cherish and promote the intimate and cordial relations of friendship between the individual members of this association against all sectional distinctions or geographical lines has also been among the chief objects of my ambition and the earnest desire of my heart. Could I now believe that my efforts have contributed in the slightest degree to enlarging that harmony of sentiment and fraternal feeling which has been so apparent throughout this meeting, I should feel that I had commenced at least to make some return for the great honor and kindness received at your hands . . .

After retiring from the presidency of the American Medical Association, Dr. Baldwin did not lose his interest in the organization. He continued to attend the annual meetings, and served as a member of the Judicial Council of that body from 1875 until 1882. He also served as a member of the nominating committee on several occasions.

At the meeting of the American Medical Association in Philadelphia, May, 1872, Dr. David W. Yandell delivered the presidential address, in which he advocated a system of medical education which was opposed to the one recommended by Dr. Baldwin. This address was reviewed by Dr. Baldwin in the *New York Medical Journal* in scathing terms for Dr. Yandell's plea for cheap medical schools. He ridiculed Dr. Yandell's preference for the American cross-roads doctor and vigorously opposed his assertion that "clinical instruction should be the alpha and omega of a medical education." He paid high compliments to Dr. Yandell's address as a literary production and included a glowing tribute to Dr. Yandell's father to whom he, as his pupil at Transylvania, was always deeply attached.

Dr. Baldwin was just as ready to defend any one of the profession if he felt that he had been wronged, as evidenced by the communication, which he sent to Dr. Gaillard's journal, in defense of Dr. J. Marion Sims, calling attention to the ungrateful manner in which that distinguished gentleman had been treated by the Woman's Hospital, an institution which he had been instrumental in founding.

It seems that Dr. Baldwin believed in

medical societies as a means of promulgating new advances in medical practices, and as a result, took an active part in such organizations. He was one of the organizers of each of the following societies: (1) The Alabama State Medical Association, December 1, 1847; (2) The Sydenham Medical Society of Montgomery, incorporated February 1, 1850; (3) The Medical and Surgical Society of Montgomery County, in November 1865; and (4) The Montgomery County Medical Society. He was also a member of the American Medical Association, and Associate Fellow of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, and an Honorary Member of the Gynaecology Society of Boston. He served as president or chairman of the first, third and fifth organizations, being honored three times with the presidency of the Medical and Surgical Society of Montgomery County. The latter organization appointed him a member of the Board of Health of Montgomery County for the year 1882.

The Social Medical Club, of Montgomery, was organized in November 18, 1872 and its membership was limited to ten local physicians and surgeons. The club met twice each month, during the winter, at the home of one of its members where formal dinners were held. Medical discussions were not allowed at such meetings. At the death of Dr. James Berney in 1880, Dr. Baldwin and the other eight members of the club were pall-bearers. One writer referred to the Social Medical Club, of Montgomery, as follows: "It has been an important factor in promoting and maintaining that harmony and high ethical tone which so remarkably characterizes the medical profession of Montgomery."

Although there was no medical school in Montgomery that Dr. Baldwin could be associated with, he was honored, in 1872, by being elected a member of the board of trustees of the Medical College of Alabama, University of Alabama, located at Mobile, and served until his death.

In March, 1877, Dr. J. Marion Sims, the distinguished gynecologist and founder of the Woman's Hospital of New York City, visited Montgomery after an absence of twenty-five years. A reception committee of the Medical and Surgical Society of Montgomery welcomed him to the city, and Dr. Baldwin, a former intimate associate and companion, was selected to make the welcoming address which was published in *The Montgomery Advertiser*. Several paragraphs of the address were republished in the article on the life of Dr. Baldwin in "Representative Men of the South," in 1880. The major part of that address, which covered sixteen pages in longhand, has been preserved. However, the whole address was included in the autobiography, "The Story of My Life," by Dr. J. Marion Sims, in 1885.

At the death of "Job," the buggy horse of Dr. Job Sobieski Weatherly, a Montgomery physician, Dr. Baldwin secured one of the "bloods" of Kentucky, and in the presence of a few close friends delivered one of his most touching and sincere speeches, although at times it had a definitely humorous vein. Dr. Baldwin had previously owned "Job" and little dreaming that Dr. Weatherly might purchase him, had, as a delicate compliment to the doctor, given the horse his name. It seems that "Job" was a high-spirited animal and had demolished several buggies and sets of harness for his former owner and in Dr. Weatherly's acceptance speech, which includes many warm remarks and expressions that were directed at both

Dr. Baldwin and his wife, he refers to these incidents as practical jokes which the animal had quit some years previously because of his love for his new master. Dr. Baldwin's speech was in reality a beautifully worded tribute to Dr. Weatherly, and "Job's" death provided the occasion for Dr. Baldwin to make a public acknowledgement of his esteem and affection for his sincere friend and associate.

Dr. Baldwin contributed many papers to the literature of his profession and some of them are as brilliant as they are scientific. His paper on "The Poisonous Properties of the Sulphate of Quinine" appeared in the April issue of the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* for 1847. This paper begins with a description of a case of convulsions, blindness and death following the use of sulphate of quinine, and is followed by another from the case book of a professional friend. The symptoms which succeeded the administration of the quinine in both patients bore a striking analogy to each other, but death did not result in the latter case. For the purpose of determining the toxicological effects of the sulphate of quinine, Dr. Baldwin performed numerous experiments on dogs. He administered the drug orally, by intraperitoneal injections, and by injections into the jugular vein, proving conclusively that overdoses of quinine were capable of causing death. This paper, which was based upon original research, attracted the attention of the medical profession and secured for Dr. Baldwin a national reputation because of the practical manner in which he treated the subject. That paper was translated into several foreign languages and is referred to not only in the English and French periodicals, and the standard works on toxicology, but also in the "Dispensatory of the United States" (1849, 8th Edition, page 1120). The reference is carried in the next five editions of the Dispensatory.

A list of papers written by Dr. Baldwin follows. This list probably is not a complete bibliography, but it directs attention to the thorough training and keen powers of observation that he had, as well as his ability to express himself clearly.

GENERAL

1. Remarks on Mustard Poultices, applied *extensively* to the surface. *West. J. M. & S.*, 3:1-11, 1845. At the end of the article the date "October 23, 1844" appears.
2. Observations on the Poisonous Properties of the Sulphate of Quinine. *Am. J. M. Sc.* (new series) 14:292-310, 1847. Reprinted from above, 22 pp., Montgomery, M'Cormick and Walshe, 1847.
3. Remarks on Trismus, or Tetanus Nascentium, and its identity with Traumatic Tetanus in the Adult. *Am. J. M. Sc.* (new series) 12:353-372, 1846.
4. Physic and Physicians. The Annual Address delivered before the Alabama State Medical Association. Montgomery, job office of Alabama Journal, 1850, 43 pp. *Am. J. M. Sc.* (new series) 20:154-155, 1850; Cambridge, 1866, 88 pp.
5. Observations on Spotted Fever. *Am. J. M. Sc.* (new series) 52:321-337, 1866.
6. Case of Glanders in the Human Subject. Read before the Montgomery Medical and Surgical Society; *Richmond & Louisville M. J.*, 6:503-512, 1868.
7. Acceptance speech when elected president of the Amer. Med. Assn. *Tr. A. M. A.*, 19:35-38, 1868.
8. Address of the President. *Tr. A. M. A.*, 20:55-80, 1869; Reprinted, Philadelphia, Collins, 1869, 28 pp.; *Richmond & Louisville M. J.*, Vol. 8, 1869; Louisville, Bell and Co., 1869, 29 pp.
9. Irrigations of Ice Water as a Means of Arresting a Hemorrhage in Cases of Placenta Praevia. *Richmond & Louisville M. J.*, (April) 1872; Reprinted. Louisville, Hull and Bros., 1872, 13 pp.

10. On the Poisonous Properties of Quinine; with remarks by J. Marion Sims. *Med. Gaz.,* New York, 8:356-360, 1881; Reprinted New York, Birmingham & Co., 1881, 8 pp.
11. Sketch and Reminiscences of the Life of Dr. J. Marion Sims; as given at the late Memorial Meeting of the Montgomery County Medical Society. *Gaillard's Medical Journal,* New York, 37: 1-9, 1884; Reprinted in "The Story of My Life" by J. Marion Sims, New York, D. Appleton & Co., 1885, p. 425.
12. Tribute to the late James Marion Sims. Montgomery, W. D. Brown & Co., 1884, 31 pp.

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1. The Late Dr. William M. Bolling. *The Montgomery Mail,* Montgomery, Alabama, p. 2, col. 2, March 10, 1859.
2. Welcoming Address at the Occasion of Dr. J. Marion Sims' return to Montgomery in 1877. *Montgomery Daily Advertiser,* Montgomery, Ala., p. 3, col. 2, Book No. 3367, March 21, 1877; Reprinted in "The Story of My Life" by J. Marion Sims, New York, D. Appleton & Co., 1885, pp. 442-446.
3. Doctor James Berney. *Montgomery Daily Advertiser,* Montgomery, Ala., p. 1, cols. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, July 25, 1880.

REVIEW

1. The presidential address before the American Medical Association, Philadelphia, May 7, 1872, by David M. Yandell, M. D. President. *New York M. J.,* 16:397-406, (Oct.) 1872.

Dr. Baldwin's study of men was a specialty and he had that unusual faculty of being able to give a photographic description of an individual. This ability was exemplified by a letter from Dr. John Dickson Bruns, of New Orleans, to Dr. R. F. Michel concerning Dr. Baldwin's biographical sketch of their mutual friend, Dr. James Berney. Extracts from that letter follow:

My Dear Michel:

The emotion with which I have just read the memorial addresses delivered by yourself, Dr. Baldwin, and Dr. Weatherly, is the strongest proof of the deep hold which our friend, Dr. Berney, had upon me. . . .

Dr. Baldwin has drawn a portrait of him which is not the least of his many excellent performances, for behind those jesting features he discovered the graver genius of the man, and he has interpreted the humor which sheathed its lightenings in a laugh, and the wit that cut to the bone with a playful stroke of a feather.

Dr. Baldwin was an ambitious individual and well prepared in his profession and naturally took high rank among the foremost practitioners of his section of the country. He was an interested student up to the time of his death. He frequently visited hospitals and doctors in other sections of the United States for the purpose of learning new methods and practices. He spent several months in Baltimore and a year in Europe to study in the leading medical schools and hospitals. It was in 1868 that he moved his family to Baltimore, but due to poor health, returned to Montgomery. The purpose of his stay in Baltimore is not definitely known, but his relatives have offered two reasons: (1) he went there with the idea of making it his home, and (2) he went there to get away where he could write his inaugural address. After the Civil War, he spent many of his vacations with his family in the mountains of New Hampshire.

Dr. Baldwin, although with the humble background of a farm boy, soon became prosperous as a physician. According to the unpublished manuscripts of the United States Census for 1850, he owned $4,000.00 worth of real estate and fifteen slaves, and the 1860 Census states that he owned $8,000.00 worth of real estate, sixteen slaves, and $100,-

000.00 in personal property. In 1870, he organized and started the First National Bank of Montgomery and was elected its president by the stockholders, a position which he held until his death. It has been stated that he enjoyed the largest and most lucrative practice in Montgomery, reaching $15,000 per annum, a very unusual income for a physician in a city of its size. In addition to his very large practice, he also was successful as a financier and accumulated a considerable fortune.

The committee in charge of organizing the Ninth International Medical Congress, which was held in Washington City, 1887, chose Dr. Baldwin as one of its vice-presidents, and it has been stated that his success in his profession and his high character as a man fully warranted his selection. He distinguished himself during a professional career of forty-nine years, not only as a practitioner of medicine and surgery, but especially as an obstetrician. The physicians looked up to him as their chief authority on the latter branch of the medical sciences. However, it has been stated that he never permitted a surgical case to pass out of his office without making an attempt for its relief, and he performed many of the major operations in surgery. It seems that his sterling character, keen mind, and inherent poise at all times played a great role in his success since he was compelled to meet in professional competition such men as Ames, Bolling, Sims, Bozeman, Berney, Gaston, Michel, Seelye, and Weatherly.

In 1884 he had an attack which was diagnosed as heart disease, from which he never fully recovered. However, he continued to be active to within a short time before his death on May 30, 1886. On June 7, 1886, the Medical Surgical Society of Montgomery held a memorial service at which several of the members eulogized Dr. Baldwin. Extracts of their addresses are given since they present a personal element that seems so essential in a paper of this nature.

[DR. WEATHERLY] . . . When I came to Montgomery, almost thirty years ago, Dr. Baldwin was universally considered at the head of the profession, not only of this city, but of the State. . . . His physique was fine; in fact there was nothing small about him. His thoughts were always chaste and pure. He was perfectly clear of all vulgarity. He kept his mind as clean and fresh as he did his body. . . . No man ever tried harder or sacrificed more to make other people happy, than Dr. Baldwin. His great ambition was to give pleasure and happiness to others.

[DR. MICHEL] . . . With a keen perception of the ridiculous, and a brain capable of the most thorough analysis, he was distinguished for his full appreciation of human character and for his wonderful correctness in the diagnosis of disease. . . .

[DR. GASTON] . . . The mind and character of Dr. Baldwin were of heroic proportions, and his body was a fit abode for such a spirit. A large, domeshaped head, a piercing grey eye overhung by a heavy brow, a nose hooked like the beak of an eagle, a firm mouth with close fitting lips and a somewhat massive chin—all set easily by a strong neck on a broad shoulder, muscular and active body, gave to him an air of strength of mind and body, of dignity, of inflexible resolution and distinc tion. . . .

Following the eulogies presented by the local physicians, Dr. Weatherly, as president, read a number of communications from individuals who were not able to be present. One cannot read these letters without being deeply impressed with the fine sentiments that were conveyed from such men as N. Bozeman, H. J. Bowditch, S. W. Gross, William Brodie, Henry Ward Beecher,

and many others. It seems worth while to quote parts of two of these letters.

[Dr. Bozeman] . . . I can never forget the many pleasant incidents of our professional and social intercourse, extending through a period of thirty-seven years. . . . He was always an unaffected, true, and sincere friend; and as a physician he possessed talents of the highest order. He was proverbially kind to his patients, faithful in the discharge of his duties and obligations, considerate of the opinions of his peers when called in consultation, and ever ready to extend a helping hand to the younger men of his profession, whenever difficulties were encountered by them and support was needed. Thus he proved himself the true physician and the wise counsellor. . . .

[Mr. Beecher] . . . I first met him several years ago at the White Mountains, and for several seasons afterwards. I found him to be genial, full of information, of a noble spirit. . . .

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